

Cassapal 1

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by
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Intro.

Cassapal I: old school fun, inspired by Edward Packard's January 1979 mini-novel "The Cave of Time" (first in the *Choose Your Own Adventure* series from Bantam Books).

The following spring 1982 Cassapal text was incomplete, now copied directly from the original hand-written manuscript. Zero editing here, minus occasional spell check and contextual correction. The original blank pages were maintained for navigation. Page format was also enlarged or reduced as necessary, to keep counts accurate and conducive for modern digital presentation.

The story of Cassapal I was intended for later enhancement, 1983 to 1985. Alas, driving the Cassapal adventure with extra tales and sub-notes never came to be, even though a mutually planned Cassapal novel series has a current 35,000-word collection of expansions, and a stash of rough illustration.

Perhaps it'll fly someday, but don't hold your breath...lest Random House makes a call or something.

Meanwhile, enjoy if you can the original Cassapal I. Nothing was narratively changed, which may at times read a bit jagged. Still, it was important to represent the genuine steps from decades ago.

Cheers.

P.S. Far as I know, the name "Cassapal" was a first.

- Lance Mazmanian, February 2025

Cassapal I

Dusk: Cassapal marketplace.

The silent fires of the sun frame the craggy horizon in an ethereal glow as the activities of the Medieval marketplace slowly drag to a close. There is much hurrying, for darkness is something to be feared in this part of the world...

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Cassapal, the city: a remarkably prosperous trading community attracting buyers large and small from all corners of the globe.

You are a citizen of this great Medieval city, and you were once part of its business community as well. That is, until a character by the name of *Sten Araston* caused your business to collapse, and made you but another pauper roaming the streets of the city.

You want revenge, yes, but somehow ol' Sten Araston disappeared with your money and valuables...and he's not been seen, that you know of, since.

Now in torn trousers, light chain mail/leather shirt, and your sword and dagger, you walk the isles of the marketplace searching for any clue that might lead you to Sten...so that you may regain what you once had and destroy the man who ruined you.

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It is nearly nightfall, and you quickly seek a place to sleep. The cold of the stars has no pity for a penniless soul such as your own...

As you turn a corner near the edge of town, a stable catches your eye.

Taking no chances, you look around to insure your presence has gone undetected: trespassing is dealt with very harshly here in Cassapal.

You dart to the stable gate and peer within. Darkness greets you. Slowly you open the gate and step inside. A horse's pant startles you, but nevertheless you proceed.

You secure the gate behind you and step toward a stall. Standing at its edge, you cast a gaze within. Empty.

You step into the stall, detach your dagger and sword, and find a spot to sleep. After positioning yourself, you are overcome with slumber.

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A trickle of sunlight pries at your consciousness as you wake to the sound of voices in the stable.

It is morning, and the fresh smell of the nearby ocean drifts to your waiting nostrils. But clear your head, for there are other matters at hand: two men are in the stable, checking their fine steeds. If they happen to find another human in their dwelling, it will surely be dealt with in a most severe manner.

You shift quietly to a half-crouch, half-sitting position. Through spaces in the wooden beams you can see two men of obvious size and strength across the stable. They converse.

Suddenly one looks toward you and says something about hay.

They both walk to your stable and stop just outside, They do not see you. Ask they talk, you hear the following:

1st Man: "Yeah, I hear that guy is back. He's up to no good, I tell you."

2nd Man: "Well, that's Sten Araston's trademark: no good!"

1st Man: "Where's he settled down? Do you know?"

2nd Man: "Well, I heard that he was staying on the outskirts of Cassapal, south end, until he found a merchant's booth in the Palace Centre. He'll probably be charging outrageous prices on feed and grain."

1st Man: "Which reminds me, we've got work to do. I think I'll go out and see ol' Sten about his hop prices. What's he livin' in now?"

2nd Man: "Some stone shanty near the Black Periphery."

1st Man: "What?! Out there all alone? He must have the courage of kings!"

2nd Man: "Just make damned sure you're not caught at night out there. Anyway, about this hay..."

They leave.

So! Sten Araston is back! And alone on the outskirts of town! A perfect setup.

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You later leave the stall and make your way toward the southern end of Cassapal. "A stone shanty" you think as you navigate through crowds and sales folk.

You stop at a bread table. While the merchant helps another customer you quickly stuff a loaf of fine wheat into your belt sack. "Lunch," you say, and you continue.

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You reach the end of town by noon. A lesser-travelled dirt road unwinds before you, making haste in its southern exit from Cassapal. A dense forest of thriving pine surrounds each side of the road, giving a false darkness to the area. The sky is scantily clouded and the sun shines like flaming magnesium.

You begin your trek down the near-forgotten trail. It appears to be 1:30 PM. You have just four hours of sunlight left in which to find the man who ruined you.

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You've covered five dusty miles, without event. You're about to give up hope when suddenly a half-mile ahead, on the right side of the road, appears a dilapidated stone shanty.

"So, Sten, I've finally caught up with you, huh?"...you say as you clutch your sword.

You decide the casual "hide in plain sight" tactic will work best in this situation, and you continue down the forest road, nearly overwhelmed with anger and hatred.

As you near the shanty you see that it has been badly weather-beaten: the beige stone is chipped and stained, the stone window openings are cracked, and the front door facing the roadway is ancient and moldering. It is not Sten Araston's taste.

He must be up to something out here. The place appears completely deserted, but you can't help but feel you're being watched. You look around, but there is no one to be seen. Still, the feeling of eyes, staring from some God-forsaken zone...

You clear your head of silly ideas and tend to the situation at hand. The shanty looks like a simple 25 by 30 foot box, with fingers of grass grown up around it. As you stand just 10 yards from the shanty you think, "What should I do first?"

You can...

A: Walk up cautiously to the door, open it, and slowly peer inside. Turn to page 55.

B: Go around the back of the shanty and try to gain entry from a rear exit. Turn to page 69.

C: Rush the door with dagger drawn! Turn to page 18.

D: Call the Cassapal authorities. Turn to page 44.

E: Call to anyone inside. Turn to page 32.

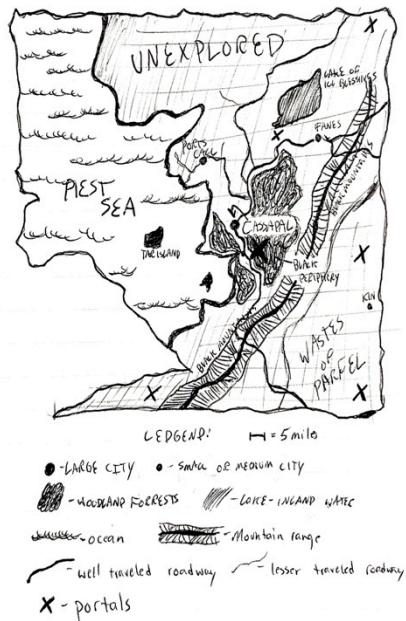
F: Crouch in the forest on the opposite side of the road and wait for any activity. Turn to page 25.

You decide to ignore the fleeing figure. Probably another transient just drifting from town to town.

You walk up to the door of the shanty, turn the knob and open it wide. The door opens to reveal a semi-dark room. There is a desk, a cabinet, and a chair in the left-hand corner. In the right corner is a crossbow and a quiver that appears to have nearly 40 bolts. In the middle of the room there is a box sitting atop a large table. Next to the box is a backpack.

You step inside the shanty. First you go to the desk and examine it. There are three drawers: one on the right side of the desk, one on the left, and one a little larger below the left. You open the right drawer. Inside is a small wooden box. You grab the box and open it. Inside you find 600 parc notes, enough to buy half your business again! You're elated beyond belief and quickly take the box from the drawer, setting it on the desk.

You check the left-hand drawer. You find a browned scroll and small sack. You open the sack and find a fine silver dust. You know it immediately as a religious precaution: *Silver Fire*. Then you take out the scroll. On it is a hand-written map:



Turn to page 107.

You grab the spear next to you and move to impale the man.

As you spring from the canvas cover, a polished crossbow bolt pierces your heart and passes through your body. One of the men says, as you slump to the ground, "The blind fool! He must have seen me standing there. Anyway, Mr. Araston, what do you wish to do with the body?"

The man with the spear looks at him calmly and says, "Feed it to the skanes."

End.

You gather your courage, draw your dagger and rush the door.

You swing your full weight into the wooden entrance. It splinters with the sound of a thousand snapping twigs. You dash through the doorway, poised and prepared for hand-to-hand combat.

There is no one here. Silence.

A wooden table is in the middle of the room, and beyond that is another door to...where? A separate room? The outside?

Your attention is averted to several yellowed scrolls laying on the table. You seat yourself in a chair facing the doorway you've just crashed through, and unroll the scrolls. Names. None familiar. Something about "Pleiades" or some nonsense.

Then you unravel another. It appears to be part of a journal. The entry was made a week from yesterday. It reads, "Markos has map of area. It has the Lost Bounty location marked clean. He knows where the key is. Must find him."

Interesting. A key? And a Lost Bounty. What could it mean?

"Hey!" calls a voice from the splintered doorway. You look up to see 285 pounds of a six-foot three bearded Norwegian. He's blocking the only exit...perhaps. Who could he be?

Well whomever he is, his anger has been triggered...for he draws a large, gleaming broadsword from its scabbard and lumbers toward you.

A: Put the scrolls in your belt pocket and make a mad dash at the man, then run out the front door! Turn to page 50.

B: Grab your dagger and attack! Turn to page 87.

C: Say, "Excuse me sir: I am lost and in need of food and drink. Forgive me if I am intruding." Turn to page 66.

D: Grab the scrolls and dive through one of the stone window openings at the sides of the shanty. Turn to page 19.

E: Try desperately to escape through the door behind you. Turn to page 27.

You dive through the window.

As you do, you're teleported into a level of Hell so powerful that you are blown apart upon entering.

End.

You grab the spear, twist it and push outward.

The man falls and you rush to uncover yourself. You jump from the cart and see the form of Sten Araston lying on the ground. "You!" he says.

You draw your sword and swing. Sten's head falls from his body. "My God!" you mutter, and quickly mount the horse. It is equipped with a saddle and saddle bags.

You pull the reins, and you're off. Should you...

A: Ride north toward Cassapal. Turn to page 64.

B: Ride south to ??? Turn to page 105.

Hurry, for an enormous Norwegian man has opened the front door of the shanty and is on his way out!

You walk to the opposite side of the road and crouch stealthily in the thicket.

Several minutes later a horse-drawn buckboard cart pulls up. The cart is covered by a canvas. Four large men, obviously fighters, get off the cart...along with a brown and gold robed vision you remember from so long ago:

Sten Araston.

They all go into the shanty, and close the door behind them.

A: You can easily slip under the canvas of the cart and hide. Wait to travel with Sten Araston. Turn to page 28.

B: Take no chances and walk the thicket trail back to Cassapal. Turn to page 26.

C: Go to the shanty door and listen. Turn to page 144.

D: Wait. Turn to page 141.

As you tun to leave, you run into the chest of a burly Norwegian axeman.

Somehow you feel your hair part in a place and manner that you've never felt before, and a rain trickles down your face that has a peculiar salty flavor.

End.

You turn to run, but there *is* no door.

Yes, it was just an illusion.

The thought lingers in your mind as the broadsword's blade parts your hair neatly down the middle.

End.

You quickly slip from your cover in the thicket and proceed to the cart.

You look around. After making sure no one has seen, you dive under the cart's cover. You're easily concealed under the canvas.

You can see here that the cart contains several weapons: three spears, four longbows, four crossbows, and four broadswords with scabbards. "Good," you say, as you touch a broadsword. "I may need this."

After six minutes of silence a rhythmic pound fills your ears. "A horse!" The horse nears the shanty from the north and slows as it does. You hear someone dismount, and then a door slams. Afterwards there are voices. They speak in a strange foreign tongue, and they seem to talk frantically...hurried, as if some sort of trouble were abound.

A door opens. Then you hear the horse coming toward the cart. You hear chains and a bridle being rattled. "They're leaving," you think quietly.

Without warning the canvas you're under lifts slightly from the back. A spear, guided by a dark, aged hand edges slowly toward you. No one has seen you, but...

A: Grab the spear and knock the man off balance. Get out of the cart and run like hell! Turn to page 20.

B: Yank the spear and then impale the man. Turn to page 15.

C: Stay calm and see what happens. Turn to page XX.

You stand before the dwelling and yell, "Is there anyone in there? Hello! Is anyone there?"

No reply.

"Excuse me," you call again, "I am lost. Could you please help me?" There is nothing. "Oh well," you say and you begin to walk away.

Suddenly a flurry of activity stirs within the house, as if someone were rushing here and there while hastily gathering items. Then you hear a door burst open around the back of the building. Seconds later a man, dressed in the same brown and gold robes you had seen Sten Araston wear so many times before, begins to penetrate the thick forest area behind the shanty. He carries a small wooden chest and several scrolls.

"Hey!" you yell. The man keeps running. What should you do?

A: Chase him. Turn to page 86.

B: Go inside the shanty and look around. Turn to page 12.

C: Run back to town. Turn to page XX.

You take no chances and run back outside.

Before you turn to judge your position, a finely crafted shaft of steel darts from the doorway and strikes the ground two inches from your foot. "My God!" you mutter as you begin to run back toward the city, by way of the trail you followed here.

You glance back, just in time to see two men emerge from the building. One carries a large silver crossbow, and the figure in brown and gold robes cradles several scrolls in his arms.

The man with the crossbow takes aim at you. Quick! Do something! You're in firing range!

A: Run around in an erratic manner to dodge the crossbow. Turn to page 116.

B: Run into the forest on the right. Turn to page XX.

C: Run into the forest on the left. Turn to page XX.

D: Keep running. Turn to page XX.

He may have seen you! Move quickly to the opposite thicket and wait.

Minutes pass, and still no one comes to the back of the house. Then, without warning, a crossbow bolt whisks toward you and plunges into your chest, impaling your heart.

Before you die, Sten Araston appears and says to you, "Act not in haste to leave, or lo, you suffer the consequences."

End.

You're not exactly sure this is the home of Sten Araston. You can't just barge in, because if the shanty does not belong to Sten you could be arrested for trespassing. So you've made a wise decision to contact authorized assistance back in Cassapal.

You now walk northbound to the city that's five miles back the way you covered. After walking 10 minutes you begin to see the rooftops of the many hundreds of one, two, and three-story buildings of Cassapal. "Four miles now," you say.

As you near the city further, you hear the rumbling of a horse-driven cart coming toward you from the north. As it nears, you move to the extreme right side of the road, pressing against the first pine needles of the forest thickets.

The cart becomes visible, driven by a man in gold and brown robes. You recognize the face as that of Sten Araston.

A wave of anger overcomes you.

Take action quickly, because the cart is but nine-hundred yards away, and its single horse is pulling fast. Choices:

A: Try to grab the side of the cart as it passes. Turn to page 61.

B: Pick up several large stones and hurl them at Sten. Turn to page 88.

C: Dive into the undergrowth near the right side of the road and jump on the back of the cart as it passes. Turn to page 56.

D: Draw your dagger and try to throw it into Sten's chest. Turn to page 85.

E: Yell, "Stop! Please! I'm hurt!" and cover your face. Attack him when he dismounts and comes close. Turn to page 49.

You cringe to the ground and act as if you're dying.

You scream, "Help! I've been stabbed!" Your hands cover your face so Sten Araston won't recognize you.

Araston's cart pulls to a quick halt. He steps to the road, stops for a moment, then walks toward you.

Perhaps if you hadn't kept your face covered you'd have seen Araston draw a broadsword.

Because he recognized you.

As you feel his blade pierce your side, you begin to understand this.

End.

You bolt from the table—scroll in one hand, dagger in the other—and try a mad dash past the man.

You may have made it...if he had just swung his heavy broadsword a second later.

You now lay decapitated on the stone steps outside...but you did make it out the door.

End.

You walk to the shanty and climb its small stone stairs.

You slowly grab the rusted knob and turn. The door creaks open. You swing it fully.

Darkness and shadows are within. But there is barely enough light from the stone window openings at the sides of the building to see a tall, thin man in a dark brown robe with gold trim, seated at a table. He's facing you, but his features are obscured by dust and shadows. He says to you, "Come in, old fiend."

Is it Sten?

Suddenly there's a slight scuffling in the right corner of the room. Someone or something shifts positions in the darkness. "I've been waiting," says the man. He reaches into his robe.

What should you do?

A: Run back outside. Turn to page 38.

B: You heard the men in the stable talk about Sten being here. The man in front of you is dressed in a strange manner, somewhat like Sten. Besides, he's reaching into his robe for something. A weapon? You take no chances: draw your dagger and attack! Turn to page 122.

C: Ask, "Who are you?" Turn to page 106.

D: Draw your dagger, step outside the shanty doorway and then say, "Show yourself, whoever you are!" Turn to page 76.

You dive into the forest. Sten rambles past you, seemingly oblivious to your presence.

Now what?

A: Follow Sten's cart back, and kill him! Turn to page XX.

B: Plunge further into the forest. Turn to page XX.

C: Return down the road to Cassapal. Turn to page XX.

You run into the thicket lining the road and wait for Sten to pass.

Within seconds the cart is upon your position. You spring from the thicket and grab the side of the cart. With the blink of an eye you are on the travelling vehicle. Sten looks back in horror, and you draw your dagger.

You act quickly, plunging the weapon deep into Sten's chest. He cries out in agony and falls from the cart, under its moving wheels. You frantically assume a command position, and tug at the horse's reins.

You halt the horse and look back to view the dying form of Sten Araston. To your horror, he's nowhere to be seen! Could his body have rolled off into the greenery? Strange.

The squeal of the horse draws your attention. It seems to sense something, becoming more nervous and restless with every passing second.

Then a snarl of anger sounds from the forest at the right. Could some sort of wild animal be around?

Night is falling quickly, so make a decision.

A: Go back and see what happened to Sten. Turn to page 105.

B: Ride back to Sten's dwelling. Turn to page XX.

C: Ride back to Cassapal, before nightfall. Turn to page XX.

The man begins to ramble your direction, and you decide to make a mad dash into the woods.

The burly axeman can't match your speed, and he gives up. But not without a healthy serving of Norwegian obscenities. Paying no attention, you penetrate deeply into the forbidding woods. You run approximately three minutes when you see something peculiar above your head in the trees before you.

Stray beams of sunlight reflect off a silver cape, snared in the branches 15 feet up. Could it possess magical properties?

>SNAP<

A twig breaks off, to your left. You turn and see a man, dressed in a dark brown robe with gold trim, standing with his back to you.

You could sneak up behind him. Besides, he looks like a carbon copy of Sten Araston...at least from here. And then there's the silver cape.

What should you do?

A: Sneak up behind the man. Turn to page XX.

B: Try to get the silver cape. Turn to page XX.

You're off!

The man in the doorway sees you and calls to the rest in the shanty. What could the weapons have been for? You decide that is something best decided by the authorities.

Suddenly from the left side of the road there appears a large black figure. Its eyes glow with a fiery red evil, such as you've never seen. Whatever it is, it has succeeded in scaring the horse for now you're veering uncontrollably to the right, into the woods. The horse has a bit of trouble entering the woods at first, but as it becomes accustomed to the rough ride the going gets easier.

Until the horse stumbles and throws you off!

You fly through the air and into a ditch. When you should feel the impact of earth, you instead keep falling.

You've smashed through a large trapdoor of some sort and onto a flight of stone steps. Blood trickles down your forehead.

Then you hear the scream. A horrible, high-pitched agony. It's the horse.

A pair of fiery red eyes glare at you from the edge of the ditch. For the first time you see its features clearly: a smoldering black skeleton with an open maw, dripping with the life fluid of your horse.

You dash down the stairs and find an open door that leads to the left and to the right: a long, obscured hallway. Where to?

Choose now, before the smoldering demon has a chance to think of you as its second course!

A: To the left. Turn to page XX.

B: To the right. Turn to page XX.

C: Close the found door and wait. Turn to page XX.

You say, "Excuse me sir: I am lost and in need of food and drink. Forgive me if I am intruding."

The man gives a giant grunt from his bearded mouth...and also replies by swinging his broadsword down on the table and slicing it in two!

Before he has the chance to swing it again, you bolt past him and out the door. The man screams several obscene Norwegian phrases at you, and gives chase.

With a heavy and infuriated Norwegian behind you now, your choices are:

A: Run into the woods for cover. Turn to page XX.

B: Draw your sword and attack! Turn to page XX.

Walk cautiously around the shanty.

As you walk past the side of the building, someone passes in front of the stone window opening. Dive for cover!

You wait. No one comes.

You stalk quietly around the back, hiding in the thicket at forest edge. You peer through the greenery to see, around the back of the shanty, a man in a dark brown and gold trim robe covering a freshly dug hole. He's hooded, standing before a cart that's covered by a canvas. He looks around suspiciously.

"That face!" you whisper, as you recognize the sharp, bearded features of Sten Araston.

His glance falls upon you...but he hasn't seen you. Or has he? He hurriedly covers the remaining hole with sparkling black soil, as if there were something of serious importance within it. He throws down his shovel and goes to the front of the shanty.

Choices:

A: Go to the hole and uncover it. Turn to page 100.

B: Wait for Sten to return. Observe his actions. Turn to page 141.

C: You've seen Sten. It's him. Draw your dagger and hide inside the cart, under the canvas. Wait for Sten to return. Turn to page 28.

D: He looked toward your hiding place in the thicket. Did he see you? Take no chances and return to Cassapal. Turn to page 43.

E: Yell obscenities to those inside the stone shanty.

Attract their attention. When they come out, change your hiding place to see exactly what you're up against. Turn to page 121.

You place the wish box and all other booty into the leather backpack. You then return to the other cabinet. It's empty.

Now with the crossbow strapped to your back, and also with the backpack of treasure, you can:

A: Head back to Cassapal. Turn to page XX.

B: Head south. Turn to page XX.

C: Take out the wish box, and wish for one of the following:

1. To have your business back. Turn to page XX.
2. To find Sten Araston. Turn to page XX.
3. To become wealthy and heir to a kingdom. Turn to page XX.
4. To banish the wish box. Turn to page XX.

Remember, there's a good possibility that the box is entirely evil. *"Make not greed your path, else suffer the fate of discontent."* - Mazmanian

You draw your dagger, step outside and call "Show yourself!"

The man slowly moves from the table, and then toward the doorway. "Is it I you wish to see?" says the mocking figure of Sten Araston.

"You!"

It's your last word before you feel a hand cover your mouth and then the sharp point of a bronze cutlass piercing your lungs, from behind.

End.

As you draw your dagger Sten leaps from the cart and onto the roadway.

He then dives into the forest and disappears. His horse-driven cart stops before you.

Choices:

A: Take the cart to Cassapal. Turn to page XX.

B: Take the cart on the road back to Sten's dwelling. Turn to page XX.

C: Give chase to Sten, in the forest. Turn to page XX.

You see the man and give pursuit.

Into the darkening forest you go. The chase is on but the man always seems to stay ahead of you. Through thicket and vine you go. Anger keeps you moving.

Finally you emerge into an open meadow. But the man is nowhere to be seen. You run halfway across, and expect to find the man hiding in some of the tall grass. Instead, laying on and *in* the ground is an aged wooden door.

"Wha—?" you say, as you examine. "Where did this come from?"

A: Try to open the door. Turn to page 129.

B: Search again for the man. Turn to page XX.

Grab your dagger and attack!

"A dagger against a sword?" That's the last thing you hear before the dagger is sliced from your hand and the cold blade of the man's broadsword pierces your gullet.

End.

The moment you stoop to pick up the stones a crossbow bolt slices the air and plunges deep into your side.

You fall to the road, withering in agony. Sten's horse-drawn cart completes your death by grinding you to a pulp beneath its four wheels.

Sten continues down the road, laughing all the while.

End.

You decide to see what this suspicious fellow was doing.

You run from the thicket and observe the freshly covered hole. Then you grab the leftover shovel and begin to dig. Layer after layer of soil upturns, and finally the shovel strikes something wooden. You dig further. A box is unearthed.

"Hmm," you mutter, as you pry at its newly fashioned lock. No use. Then you pull your dagger and jam it between the lock and clasp, and push with all your might.

>SNAP<

The lock pops off! Hurriedly, you open the lid.

A scroll lays at the bottom of the box, and it seems to be completely intact.

"Hey!" yells someone to your left. You turn to see a large bald man standing near the cart, staring your way in anger. He draws an enormous double-edged battleaxe, and comes at you!

A: Run with the box. Turn to page 63.

B: Grab the shovel and fight! Turn to page XX.

You jump from the cart.

When you do, the horse makes a mad dash and runs with the cart down the road. You listen as the last rattles of the cart's wheels fade into a distant vanishing point.

Then you see something that sends waves of paralysis through your body: from all points of the forest around you there emerge seventeen figures. They slowly approach, forming a circle around you. As they get closer you see they have fiery red eyes, and their skin is smoking, as if they're very cold...or smoldering.

Their skin is black; their faces have no features save for dripping holes where mouths should be. They clutch toward you.

What should you do?

A: Try to run. Turn to page 26.

B: Draw your sword and start hacking! Turn to page XX.

You peer into the darkness and ask, "Who are you?!"

The man shifts position and says, "Why should you want to know?" You reply is, "I'm looking for Sten Araston. Is he here?"

The man pauses then says, "Why don't you step in, and see?"

You put one foot into the doorway. Suddenly a hiss of air crosses the room. You see to your dismay that a man, secluded in the corner of the shanty, has just fired a crossbow bolt.

It's all you know before the bolt pierces your brain.

End.

A map of the area, with a small piece missing.

You put that atop the desk. Then you check the bottom left drawer. As you open it, you hear an animal hiss. The drawer opens to reveal the poised form of a black and silver cobra, curled around a glowing blue wand.

Thinking quickly you grab the small sack of Silver Fire, open it, then sprinkle a pinch on top of the cobra. Instantly there's a brilliant flash. The black and silver cobra is reduced to a pile of ashes.

You grab the wand. It's a strange tool of magic, not like any you've seen. You then gather the wand, the sack scroll, and the box, placing them all on the table in the middle of the room.

The backpack will come in handy for these items.

You then go to the box next to the backpack on the table. It's locked. You draw your dagger and jam it between the clasp and the lock. Pushing very hard should cause it to give way.

>SNAP<

The lock pops off. You open the lid slowly, finding twelve glowing spheres inside, each about two inches across. "Hmm," you say, and close the lid.

Then you go to the right hand corner of the room and grab the crossbow. You strap it to your backpack and walk back to the left corner, to inspect the cabinet above the dock.

Turn to page 132.

Your erratic dance slightly tricks the marksman, but he still manages to clip your left shoulder.

You fall painfully to the ground...and onto a small trapdoor. Funny, you didn't see the door here before...

The trapdoor has a handle of brass that pulls up and away from you. You turn back toward the bow marksman to see if you have enough time to act in some way before he reloads.

You do! Act quickly!

A: Open the door and scuttle in. Turn to page 137.

B: Run into the woods on the right (there's not enough time to turn left). Turn to page XX.

You open your mouth to yell.

Before you utter a word, a man working for Sten Araston returns silently from his wood collection.

You would never have known he was behind you, save for the fact that his axe found your kidneys and spine.

End.

You gather your strength and attack!

In one swift moment you're upon him. Suddenly from his robe pocket he produces a scroll and tries to ward your assault with it. You grab it from his hand—and as you do, something flashes in the shanty corner where the scuffling noise had been.

A hiss of sliced air and the resounding TWANG of tensed wire fills the room. An intense, prodding pain floods your right shoulder. You scream in agony, and you now find a fourteen inch crossbow bolt protruding from your shoulder.

Then you see the source, as a man dressed in a scale mail tunic, black cloak, leather boots and trousers, steps from the darkness. In his arms he carries a glimmering crossbow.

With the scroll in your one hand and the dagger in the other, you dive through the stone window opening to your left. You land hard on the ground, painfully breaking the crossbow bolt into pieces.

Except for the part that's penetrating, of course.

As you gain your balance, another searing barrage of pain floods the far left side of your back.

You've been hit again!

You turn around to the see bowman readying yet another bolt. Should you...

A: Run into the woods for cover. Turn to page XX.

B: Hurl your dagger at the bowman. Turn to page 26.

C: Run north to the city of Cassapal, and seek medical assistance. Turn to page XX.

You contemplate the situation momentarily, and then move to open the door.

A rusted handle protrudes from the right side, and you give it a yank.

Turn to page 137.

There are two cabinets. You slowly begin to open one.

Inside you find dust and three jars of black fluid. However, the strangest thing is the small compartment in the rear of the cabinet. You pull it open. A cold wind blows through it, but you cannot see inside.

Then you see something, but you do not believe your eyes.

The compartment is full of stars. "God, I wish my old friend Barsage were here! He'd love this!"

Suddenly you feel a tap on your shoulder. You turn around quickly to see the face of a man you thought to be dead. Your mouth falls open as you say, "Barsage!"

"Yes, that's right, friend," the white-bearded figure in blue robes says. "It's been a while."

You say, "How'd you— where did you come from?!"

"Oh, you requested my presence, of course."

"Huh?"

"Yes! You *wished* for me to be here."

"But..."

"I should go now. But remember the box can be as evil as it can be good."

With that, Barsage vanishes.

Turn to page 133.

A wish box! Up until now, you've only heard of such things in legends. Now you have it, in your hands.

Almost.

You turn to look at the box once more. It's outlined in the rear of the cabinet, and you find that it pulls out.

Turn to page XX.

You pull the door's handle.

It springs up, revealing a flight of stone stairs leading down. You see a torch burning somewhere at the end of the steps.

You reach up and pull the door shut. There's a deadbolt. You slide it into place. Quickly you race down the steps.

You're startled by a sudden banging on the door and the sound of someone trying to pull the handle. You hear the handle break off and you continue down the stairs, anyway.

Soon the stairs dump into a north-south corridor, where the torch is. You grab the torch and make a decision. Right or left?

A: Go right. Turn to page XX.

B: Go left. Turn to page XX.

You decide to wait for a while, and see what develops.

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Minutes pass and nothing changes...except for the breeze, which picks up speed and intensity. Soon a fierce wind begins to blow. You notice the sky to the south has grown dark and cloudy.

Forgetting about the business at hand, you decide to leave the place at once: the storms near Cassapal are not to be tried or mocked.

As you run from the thicket, the glistening shaft of a freshly polished crossbow bolt whisks past you and lodges in the bark of an ancient oak. You turn to face the assailant, but you see no one.

Then as suddenly as the first, another bolt slices the air before you...this time but inches from your shoulder. "Sten must have seen me!" you think, as you dive for cover behind the safety of several aged logs. You hear the THUNK of yet *another* bolt as it hits the log you're hiding behind.

What should you do?

You raise you head slightly and see, for the first time in years, Sten Araston. Standing about fifteen yards away, he's fumbling with the loading mechanism of his crossbow.

Choices:

A: Draw your sword and rush Sten. Turn to page XX.

B: Run into the woods. Turn to page XX.

You cross the road cautiously, mount the shanty's stone steps, crouch at the door, and listen.

Silence.

You then move to open the shanty's door, turning the knob slowly. You swing the door open.

You're blasted by a super-heated wind.

As you feel the flesh on your body being ripped from the bone, you wonder who the caped figure in the corner of the shanty's room is...

...the one pointing his finger at you.

End.